

# Man rescued after drifting in Pacific for 3 months

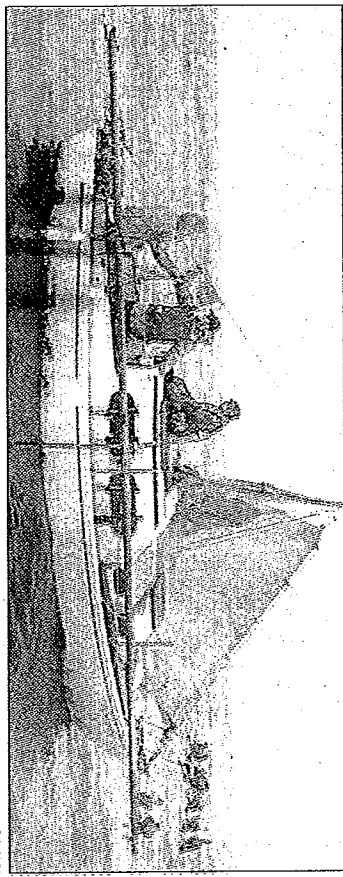
Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — A man who survived three months adrift in the Pacific Ocean by collecting rainwater in a bucket and roasting the sea birds that landed on his sailboat thanked the crew of the U.S. warship that rescued him.

Richard Van Pham, 62, of Long Beach returned to California on Tuesday. He was held temporarily by U.S. immigration officials, then released after officials verified he was a legal, permanent resident.

He had lost about 40 pounds but was in good condition when he was found aboard his damaged sailboat a week ago by the San Diego-based frigate McClusky, Navy officials said.

"If you travel at sea, you take what



U.S. NAVY

**Sailors from the warship McClusky** speak to Richard Van Pham, left, aboard Van Pham's sailboat Sept. 17 after they found him adrift off Costa Rica.

you find," Pham said in Wednesday's editions of the *Los Angeles Times*. "If you are scared, you will die."

Van Pham set sail from Long Beach in his 26-foot sailboat, Sea Breeze, bound for Santa Catalina Island, some

25 miles offshore. En route, a storm broke his mast and his outboard motor and two-way radio also failed.

On Sept. 17, his boat was spotted from a plane 275 miles southwest of Costa Rica, about 2,500 miles away from his original destination. When the McClusky neared, its crew saw it jury-rigged sail flapped from a splintered mast and a man cooking a seabird on a makeshift grill.

The ship's corpsman, Petty Officer 1st Class A.J. Davis, said Van Pham described bashing a sea turtle with a bat as it swam near his boat and then cooking part of the meat while using the remainder as bait for seabirds.

Capt. Terry Bragg, commander of Destroyer Squadron One in San Diego, which oversees the McClusky,

Flip to SURVIVE on 44A



**Van Pham** tells of his three-month trial in the Pacific after his sailboat and radio were damaged in a storm.

\* JUST IMAGINE IF YOU WOULD, SUCH AN ORDINAL<sup>as</sup>  
DESCRIBE THE VARIOUS SENSORY INPUTS THAT WOULD BE CONSISTENT WITH A SURVIVAL EXPERIENCE  
LIKE THIS<sup>as</sup>

VISION - \_\_\_\_\_ NAME \_\_\_\_\_

AUDITION - \_\_\_\_\_

SMELL - \_\_\_\_\_

TASTE - \_\_\_\_\_

TOUCH - \_\_\_\_\_

# Survive! 'A 3-hour cruise gone bad'

Continued from 37A

said he had never heard a story of survival like Van Pham's.

"It's a three-hour cruise gone bad," Bragg said. "It's like a cross between Gilligan's Island and Robinson Crusoe."

Van Pham had used a small grill on board his boat to cook seabirds and turtle meat after he ran out of food a week into the ordeal.

To keep the grill going, he began disassembling parts of the boat for fuel, Bragg said.

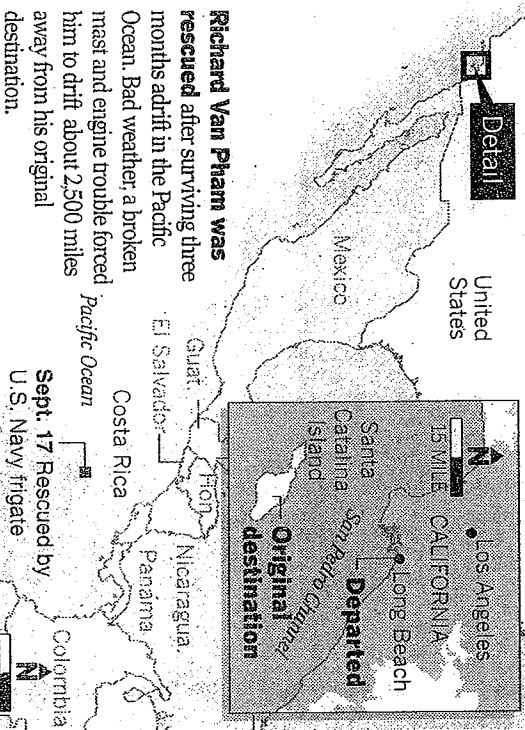
Each day he drifted at sea. Van Pham said, he looked for any sign of life, any sign of land.

"I see nothing," he said. "Then one day, I see a plane. I know I'm close to people. They tip their wings to say hello. Two hours later, a ship comes to my boat. I am very, very happy."

Van Pham was dropped off Sunday in Puerto Quetzal, Guatemala, when the McClusky visited port. The ship's crew collected about \$800 to pay for his plane trip home.

Navy officials said the most poignant moment came when Van Pham left the Sea Breeze. "He was unable to fix the sailboat. Van

## Man adrift for three months



Pham approved having crew members set fire to the Sea Breeze. It sank in 8,700 feet of water. "He waved goodbye to his sailboat," said Petty Officer 3rd Class Joseph Slaght. "He was upset... and said he was going to miss it."